The Golden Age

James ROBINSON Paul SMITH

Richard ORY

BOOK ONE OF FOUR

"The world was at peace."

THE EARLY '40S.

WARTIME.

WHEN BRAVE AMERICANS GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR COUNTRY.

IN DISTANT LANDS AND FAR AWAY.

ON THE HOMEFRONT... THE PAIN WAS OF THE HEART.

DEATH COMING TO FAMILIES IN THE GUISE OF DREADED TELEGRAMS.

SAD.

WESTERN UNION

BUT WITHOUT THE BLOOD AND FIRE THAT EUROPE KNEW TOO WELL.

USO EVERY SATURDAY

WAR BONDS

FOR THOSE AT HOME THE WAR WAS SCRAP DRIVES, FOOD PARCELS, AND THE BUYING OF WAR BONDS...THE RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE OF PURE, CLEAN, PATRIOTISM.

BATTLE WAS RAVAGING EUROPE AND ASIA, WITH NATIONS' PEOPLE BECOMING COLD...HARD...CALLOUS, FROM ALL THEY HAD TO ENDURE.

THE BLOOD AND FIRE.

BUT AMERICA...

DESPITE LOSING ITS SONS AND HUSBANDS, FOR AMERICA IT WAS **STILL** A TIME OF INNOCENCE.

AND A TIME OF GODS.

A HOMEFRONT KEPT CLEAN AND SAFE BY BRIGHTLY GARBED GODS.

MEN OF POWERS. SUPER POWERS.

OF FLIGHT.

OF SPEED.

OF STRENGTH.

AN AGE OF GOLD AND VIRGIN WONDER. WHEN NO CROOK, OR SPY, OR SABOTEUR FELT SAFE.

THE HALCYON DAYS OF THE JUSTICE SOCIETY AND THE ALL STAR SQUADRON.

BRAVE HEROES IN GAUDY COSTUMES, FIGHTING THE HOMEFRONT GOOD-FIGHT.

WITH FISTS AND SMILES AND HAPPY ENDINGS...

T-SIZED POWERHOUSE PUMMELS PERVERT

day the women of Boston can feel a ttle safer, knowing that Mr. Fingers is behind bars. The gangly jewel-thief, who pinches his female victims' back- sides as a trademark part of his nightly ...prehended and given a

LIFE

HEROES ALL:
A profile of the Justice Society of America.

COSTUMED HERO HAS FIFTH COI SEEING STARS

DAILY PLANET

RAG DOLL "RUSHED" BEHIND BA
The Flash saves triple
In a blur of scarlet sp... Doll was again captured b... ...ash. The kidnap... ...e Van Elk trir... delivered...

LULLABY ON BROADWAY!
Sandman catches Theater-Blade
Theater-Blade, the murderous fiend who brought a reign of ter- ror to New York's theater-goe... with his savage, random killin... was at last apprehended by ... gas-masked vigilante, Sandman.

A surprising revelatio... Theater-Blade's identity ... that of well-known theat... moter Monty Norman. ...d hoped to scare ... from Broadwa... ...o fail, and ...

BRAINWAVE SUFFERS BRAIN DRAIN AT HAND EMERALD KNIGHT!

AMERICAN PLANES SAVED FROM DESTRUCTION BY MAN OF THE HOUR!
At Midnight yesterday the down- town factory where 24 newly-com- pleted B-52 bombers ...re being stored should ... ...n explo- sive inf... ...was not ...ism of ...have been ...ermo. The fact that causing due to the he... ...r a daredevil pursuit ...

continued from pa...

...was today save... from destruction ...by that winged wonder, Hawk- man. An Easter mass with several high-ranking gen- erals among the worshippers was the target of a bizarre "death ray" wielded by villain... fiend and f... columnist... Spoiler. Repor... Spoiler... in the... belf... "s... F...

...ther dea... ...ct The ... ...Rod shone out, ...ith Starman ...ing off into ...ight, and ...coming ...hin

UNTIL AUGUST 6, 1945.

THE BOMB.

IT MARKED THE END OF WAR.

AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF AN ERA.

LIFE

THE BEGINNING OF THE END...

...OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

THE SHIPS ARE IN... UNLOADING THEIR CARGO.

UNLOADING SOMETHING IN DEMAND THIS YEAR. SOMETHING THE COUNTRY IS GLUTTED WITH, BUT CAN'T GET ENOUGH OF..

HAPPINESS.

1946. A YEAR OF HEROES. SOLDIERS WHO WENT... AND FOUGHT... AND RETURNED.

AND NOW LOVERS KISS ONCE AGAIN.

FATHERS FINALLY SEE SONS AND DAUGHTERS WHOSE BIRTHS THEY WEREN'T AROUND TO WITNESS.

MOTHERS HEAR THEIR SONS' VOICES. AND WEEP.

WERE THERE EVER MYSTERY MEN WHO CALLED THEMSELVES HEROES? WHO CAN REMEMBER?

IT'S 1946.

OF COURSE LIFE CONTINUES. THE MAJOR WORK BEING... GETTING BACK TO WORK.

GETTING BACK HOME.

AND BACK TO NORMAL.

STREETS ARE SWEPT CLEAN OF THEIR WARTIME FERVOR.

RG

PPLIE

AND MEN WHO HAD PUSHED ON INTO OCCUPIED TERRITORY... SETTLE DOWN TO PUSHING THEIR PENS.

HEY, EVERYONE! GET TO THE WINDOWS, HE'S COMING.

BUT...

...IT'S STILL 1946.

AND FOR ONE HERO...

...THE HOMECOMING HAS JUST STARTED.

-- AND ALL NEW YORK HAS TURNED OUT TO HONOR ITS GREATEST CHAMPION.

TEX THOMPSON-- MR. AMERICA-- THE AMERICOMMANDO!

"AS MR. AMERICA, TEX THOMPSON WAGED A ONE-MAN WAR ON CRIME IN THE DARK AND DIRTY STREETS OF NEW YORK.

"NOW, THE NATIVES OF THAT GREAT METROPOLIS RISE AS ONE TO CHEER THE RETURN OF THIS GREATEST OF MYSTERY MEN."

"FEW KNEW WHY THOMPSON DISAPPEARED IN 1942. SOME FEARED HE'D PERISHED DURING SOME TWO-FISTED ONSLAUGHT ON WRONGDOING.

"IN REALITY, THIS BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE HAD PARA-CHUTED INTO OCCUPIED GERMANY-- ON ORDERS KNOWN ONLY TO PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT--

"--TO POSE AS AN OFFICER IN THE GERMAN S.S., WHILE STRIKING FROM WITHIN AS THE AMERICOMMANDO.

"THE REICH'S CADRE OF SUPER HUMANS...OTTO FRENTZ, THE DREADED PARSIFAL...AND ADOLF HITLER HIMSELF.

"ALL DIED BY THOMPSON'S HAND.

"WITH THE FACTS OF THOMPSON'S SELFLESS MISSION NOW REVEALED TO ALL, AMERICA LOVES ITS CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS.

"THOMPSON SMILES AT THE CROWD.

"AND SMILE HE MAY--

"--THIS IS ONE MAN WHOSE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT."

BUT WHAT ABOUT ME, TEX?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

THE SHIPS ARE IN... UNLOADING THEIR CARGO.

THOUGH NOW THERE ARE NO CHEERS OR TEARS OF JOY... FOR THE MEN WHO SWEAR AND SWEAT AND HAUL THE CRATES.

ARRIVING IN AMERICA IS TINNED FISH FROM PORTUGAL... COOKING OIL FROM SPAIN...

...AND ONE FINAL, FORGOTTEN...

...RETURNING HERO.

back--

--you're back.

finally found the courage to return.

you want to get back on that boat and sail away.

far away-- away from the eyes.

eyes everywhere. you feel them--burning into your soul.

if only they'd sear your brain--

danger! you sense it everywhere--as if you're prey.

JUNAI

DAMN BACKACHE'S A KILLER.

COUPL'A BOILERMAKERS OUGHTA FIX THAT.

WEEK IN BED 'D FIX IT BETTER.

--and return your memory to you.

KILLER...

!!!

it's not funny but you laugh anyway.

you, paul kirk-- manhunter--

are now a man hunted.

1947. AND A MAN SPEAKS.

THE PEOPLE LISTEN. ALL THE PEOPLE...

...TO THE PRESIDENT... HIS VOICE THICK WITH EMOTION.

THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR...

...IS *THE* GREATEST DISTINCTION THAT THIS COUNTRY CAN BESTOW ON ONE OF ITS NATIVE SONS.

CBS

YET, AS I PLACE THIS AROUND YOUR NECK, TEX THOMPSON... *MR.* AMERICA, I HAVE ONE THOUGHT.

"THIS ISN'T ENOUGH. THIS ISN'T *NEARLY* ENOUGH."

MR. PRESIDENT...

THOMPSON SPEAKS. *STILL* LISTENING ARE THE PEOPLE.

...SERVING MY COUNTRY IS ALL THE HONOR I WANT.

Documentary's coming along. Still needs an ending, though. One I'm happy with.

...S ALL THE HONOR...

VALOR

Could trim this sequence. There's too much Thompson. This film's about mystery men--"where are they now?" NOT about Thompson--we all know where he is.

Didn't think the editing would take this long. I'm turning into a perfectionist. And the title--"yesterday's Gods." Too corny.

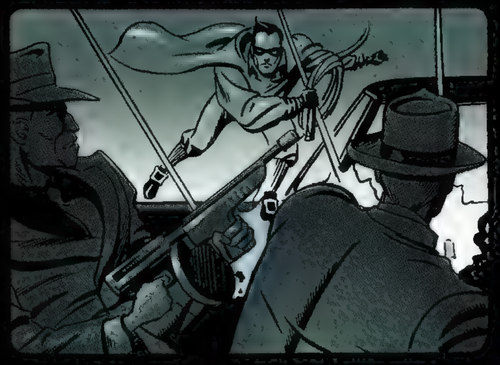
Danger of running over-budget. Can't let TIME get away from me. Not if I expect offers to make more films AFTER this.

JOHNNY QUICK could finish the WHOLE movie. Working edit--fine cut--rewrite the voice-over--lay the sound track.

All in a moment.

But Quick's not here. NOT ANYMORE.

And Johnny Chambers works at his own pace.



Still torn by the narrative. Do I make it palatable to the public? OR do I tell the truth?

"...THE EARLY '40S, HE SPENT AS THE SCOURGE OF THE NEW YORK UNDERWOR...

Ha. Thompson was second-rate. Just another pair of fists and a domino mask. And that costume--a joke.

"...INTO THE NAZI HEARTLAND FOR THE WAR'S DURATION...

Yeah. THAT was something. Although he'd been so ineffectual over here, most of us didn't realize he'd even gone.

"...RETURNED TO GLORY AND A NATION'S LOVE...

He CERTAINLY did.

"...NTLEMEN, GENTLEMEN. MY APPOINTMENT TO REPLACE THE LATE SENATOR HUGHES IS BY NO MEANS SURE...

It's as sure as his moustache. WHO does he think he's kidding?

And my film's big question--where are the REAL mystery men?

The joke--the frustrating joke--is that I know the answer and can't say. I know EXACTLY where they are. AND what they're doing. Some of 'em, anyway--

Jay--the first to quit. With a shrug and a half smile, like he didn't really care. How'd he put it--? "The world's gotten too fast for the Flash."

Married that girl of his--settled down. I hear his research company's doing well--in a small way.

ME or HIM--I wonder who was faster.

No--maybe I don't.

And Carter Hall--losing it. Getting more and more into the Egyptian thing.

"Reincarnated from an ancient pharaoh." That's what he always said. Now, he's obsessed by the notion.

I just think--he's mad.

Terry Sloane--His airline's up and running.

He was good at EVERY-THING. That's what made him MR. TERRIFIC. But "everything" is a lot to keep in line. It DILUTED his intensity.

And God knows a costumed hero NEEDS intensity.

The airline, he bought for a song. Too cheap, some say. Rumor has it he used force to get the price so low.

So much for "Fair Play," huh, Terry?

FAIR PLAY

And Johnny Quick--THAT JERK! He separated from his wife, stopped running, stopped smiling, and started smoking.

Good riddance to him.

I should have done things differently--I see that now. But a lot should have been different then. The war could have ended in days if the super-heroes had been allowed to fight it.

Hitler's Spear of Destiny, with the power to control super-heroes when they crossed into occupied territory... was fiction. To explain--excuse--why we didn't go to war.

The real reason was a German super-hero, Otto Frentz. Had the code name Parsifal, although he looked nothing like a knight in armor. But his power--his power negated the super-powers of others. Of course we didn't know that in 1940.

Until Green Lantern and Starman went to Germany on a reconnaissance mission--to "assess the situation." They barely escaped with their lives.

1942. The Philipines. The Flash and the Ray were asked to aid MacArthur's initial push. During the foray, Frentz was sighted. And we all know what happened to MacArthur's initial push.

It was thought an American super-human's death would be too much of a morale blow. By presidential decree **no** super-hero was to cross the Atlantic. If only Frentz's whereabouts could have been pinpointed. If only he could have been eliminated. If only.

But not even the Nazi high command knew Frentz's day-to-day whereabouts. And U.S. intelligence certainly didn't.

When Thompson finally found and killed Frentz, the Allies were already in reach of Berlin. The A-Bomb was a reality. It was too late for us with the masks and the super-powers.

Thompson basked in the people's love. And out of vanity--pride bruised by glory denied--we gave up our costumed identities. Most of us.

Like sulking children no longer wanting to play--

--except for one. He had nobler reasons for putting his mask away in the drawer--

--along with his power ring.

THERE'S A WINTER'S CHILL IN GOTHAM CITY.., EVEN THOUGH IT'S SUMMER.

TROUBLE'S BREWING.

IT'S MY WRITERS...SOME OF THEM HAVE SOCIALIST TIES. OR A MEMBERSHIP CARD SOMEWHERE IN THEIR PASTS.

NOW THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UNAMERICAN ACTIVITIES IS BEGINNING TO MAKE THINGS HARD FOR THEM. YOU'RE MY LAWYER, GIVE IT TO ME STRAIGHT... HOW CAN I FIGHT THIS?

YES, I DO INTEND TO STAND BEHIND MY EMPLOYEES. THEY'RE GOOD WRITERS... GOOD MEN.

GBC

FIRE THEM? BETTER...SAFER FOR ME...?

WHEN HAVE I *EVER* PLAYED IT SAFE?

ALAN SCOTT'S SHOULDERS ACHE... AS IF THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD WERE ON THEM. YET ANOTHER TASK, HE THINKS AND SIGHS...

...GET A NEW LAWYER.

SIR...

...MR. CHAMBERS IS HERE.

I WAS IN TOWN. HAD TO STOP IN AND SAY HELLO. ALAN. TERRIFIC TO SEE YOU.

AND YOU, JOHNNY, AND YOU. HOW ARE THINGS...?

...HOW'S THE FILM?

GOD, HE LOOKS TIRED, THINKS ALAN.

GOD, HE LOOKS TIRED, THINKS JOHNNY.

THE FILM...? THE FILM'S GOING GREAT.

DUE TO *YOUR* FINANCING, OF COURSE. THANKS FOR THAT LAST CHECK, BY THE WAY.

IF YOU REALLY WANT TO THANK ME YOU CAN PUT OUT THAT CIGARETTE.

I'M SORRY... I...

NO...*I'M SORRY.* RUDE OF ME. LIGHT UP IF YOU WANT.

RESPONSIBILITY BREEDS HEADACHES. I NEED A DRINK; I IMAGINE YOU DO TOO.

I'M HEARING LESS AND LESS ABOUT JOHNNY QUICK...YOU'RE RETIRED?

NOT OFFICIALLY, NO.

BUT NOTHING'S LIKE IT WAS. THE VILLAINS USED TO SEEM SO... SO DAMN *VILLAINOUS*. DARK COSTUMES, DARK POWERS, DARK DEEDS.

THEY HAVEN'T CHANGED, SO I GUESS *I* HAVE. NOW THEY JUST SEEM... *SILLY*. SOMETHING FOR THE COPS TO HANDLE.

THE NEED FOR JOHNNY QUICK... IT JUST ISN'T THERE ANYMORE.

ALAN LOOKS INTO JOHNNY'S EYES... AND SEES HOW MUCH THE LAUGHTER'S LEFT THEM.

AND THIS IS ALAN SCOTT I'M TALKING TO?

Y-YES?

NOT GREEN LANTERN?

OH, *NOW* I UNDERSTAND... STILL TRYING TO "*CREATE*" AN ENDING FOR YOUR DOCUMENTARY? "*MY GLORIOUS EMERALD COMEBACK.*"

IT WON'T HAPPEN.

GBC

YOU STILL FEEL THE SAME? I NOTICE YOU'RE WEARING THE RING.

HABIT, JOHNNY, PURELY HABIT. I'D FORGOTTEN IT WAS THERE... GREEN LANTERN'S DAYS ARE OVER, AND THAT *IS* OFFICIAL.

DO YOU REALIZE THE POWER I HAVE? I COULD LEVEL CITIES. IF NOT FOR OTTO FRENTZ, I COULD HAVE ENDED THE WAR IN AN AFTERNOON.

THE ATOM BOMB... YOU SAW WHAT IT DID... THE LIVES LOST, THE ASH AND BODIES. A FRACTION OF *MY* POWER... A *FRACTION.*

WHO DECIDED THE BOMB SHOULD BE DROPPED? *MEN.* WHAT RIGHT DID THEY HAVE TO UNLEASH *SUCH* DEVASTATION ON THE WORLD? WE WON THE WAR, *YES*... BUT WHO'S TO SAY WE WERE MORALLY RIGHT?

I HAVE POWER FAR GREATER THAN THE BOMB. WHAT MORAL RIGHT DO *I* HAVE TO IT...? WHAT IF *I* ERRED ONE DAY AND A CITY DIED?

AND IN THESE TROUBLED TIMES, I FEEL IT'S ALAN SCOTT THAT'S NEEDED MORE ...BY MY EMPLOYEES, WHO RELY ON ME TO BE HERE FOR THEM.

I WIELD POWER BEYOND IMAGINATION.

I'M MARRIED TO THAT POWER BY A RING OF GREEN.

I WANT A DIVORCE.

ANYWAY, LET'S MOVE ON TO HAPPIER TOPICS... *HOW'S LIBBY?*

He's been too busy with his own life. He doesn't know...

AND JOHNNY'S EYES GROW SADDER STILL.

LIBBY LAWRENCE...SHE'D ALMOST GROWN USED TO THE NAME AGAIN. NEW MEXICO... ITS BEAUTY...HAD HELPED HER FORGET SHE WAS EVER "MRS. CHAMBERS."

JOHNNY AND LIBBY WERE MARRIED DURING THE PASSIONATE DESPERATION OF WARTIME. PEACE LOOMED, AND THE MARRIAGE HIT A SNAG... JOHNNY'S IRREVERENCE TO LIFE AND THE PROSPECT OF SETTLING DOWN.

LIBBY FELT SHE WANTED STABILITY. SHE FOUND IT IN ANOTHER HERO'S ARMS.

GOD...I'M DYING OF BOREDOM.

MOST MYSTERY MEN BECAME ONE FROM SOME DRIVING NEED... FOR REVENGE...ATONEMENT. JONATHAN LAW BECAME THE TARANTULA...

...TO RESEARCH A BOOK.

A BOOK ON SUPER-HEROES. IT HAD PRACTICALLY WRITTEN ITSELF. HIS NEXT WORK...HIS "GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL"...

...WAS PROVING A LITTLE HARDER.

HONEY, HOW ARE YOU?

OH... FINE, FINE.

THE WORK?

THREE PAGES TODAY.

EVEN WITHOUT THE DUST THAT SHE CAN STILL FEEL ON HER FINGERTIP, LIBBY KNOWS HE'S LYING.

TWO MEN SHE'S LOVED... BOTH NAMED JOHN...

...BOTH...

LIBBY'S EYES ARE WATERING.

IT MUST BE THE SUNSET.

AND IN THE DISTANCE A RADIO CAN BE HEARD...

...THE VOICE COMING FROM IT IS FAINT BUT DISTINCT. IT'S THOMPSON'S.

AMERICA NEEDS A CHAMPION. A FRESH FACE FOR THIS FRESH NEW AGE.

THE NEW MEXICO EVENING IS WARM.

IT ISN'T, IN RHODE ISLAND.

I'VE TRAVELLED. I'VE SEEN THE COUNTRY. YOU, THE PEOPLE, WANT--DESERVE--MORE. DIDN'T YOU FIGHT FOR THAT...? DIE FOR THAT?

IN THE SAME WAY THAT EVERY AMERICAN DESERVES AN EDUCATION AND A HOME IN THIS BRIGHT FUTURE... DON'T YOU ALSO DESERVE A CHAMPION TO PROTECT THAT TOMORROW?

TO INSURE THAT FUTURE IS EVER SHINING BEFORE US?

I IMPLORE THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO BEGIN DEVELOPING THE TECHNOLOGY FOR SUCH A BEING...

NOR IS IT WARM IN CHICAGO... WHERE CHILL WINDS MAKE CRIME ALL THE MORE COLD-BLOODED.

1804

SOLOMON'S

JEWELR

...OUTTA HERE! WE'VE GOT EVERYTHING, RIGHT?

JUST TAKIN' CARE OF... THE FINISHIN' TOUCHES.

HEY! I DON'T HEAR THE CAR.

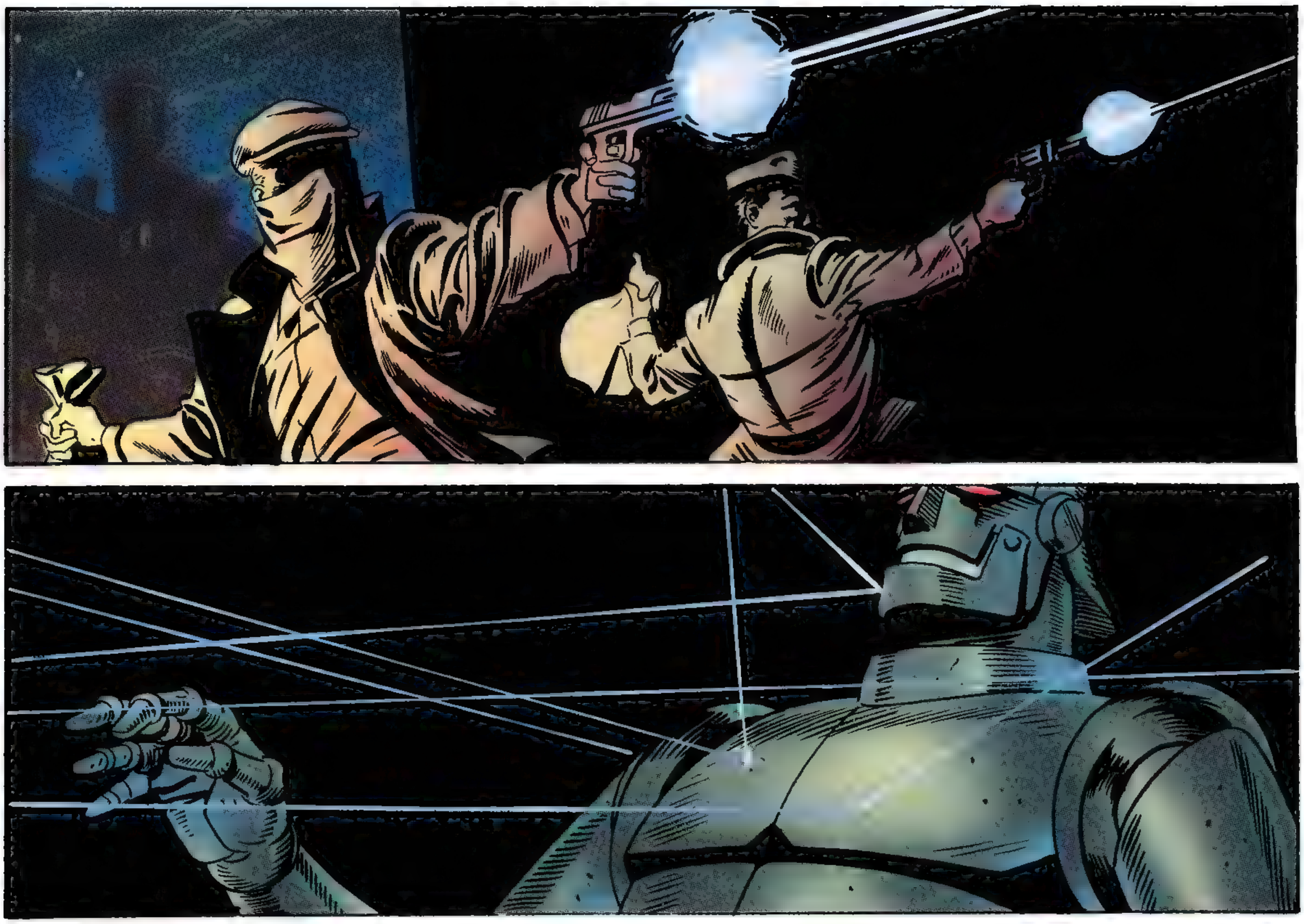
I *TOLD* FLOYD TO KEEP TH' ENGINE RUNN--

JEEZUS!!

FLOYD?!

OHHH... THIS IS BAD... WE GOT IT BAD...

AN UNDERSTATEMENT.



PUNY THINGS... OF FLESH AND BONE.

FLESH BLEEDS. BONE BREAKS.

LET ME SHOW YOU!

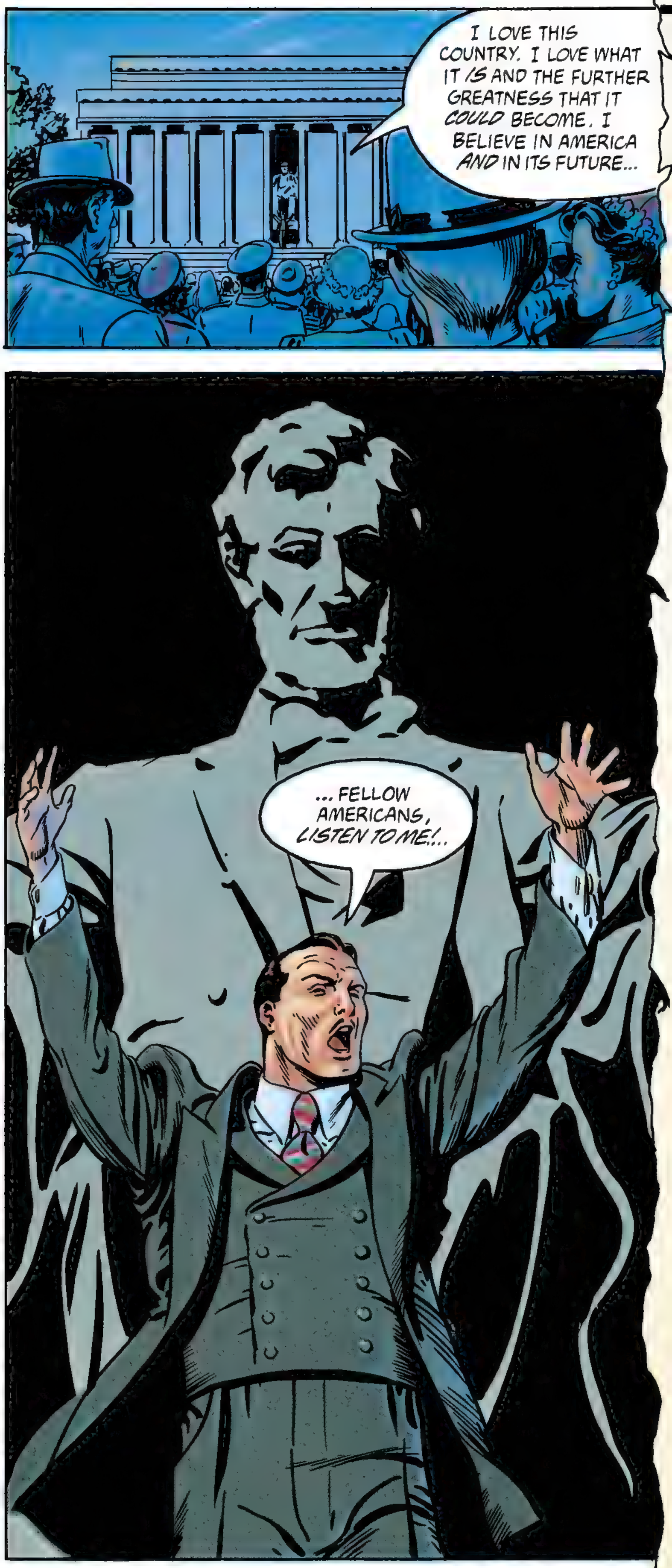
SNAP

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN ROBOTMAN'S PRIMARY WISH WAS TO STRESS THE MAN IN HIS NAME.

SOLOMON'S JEWELRY

TIMES CHANGE.

THOMPS



Thompson took the dais with the eloquent confidence the nation has come to expect. From the moment he opened his mouth, his audience was transfixed—entranced.

Thompson's tone differed slightly this time. Charming as ever, he began by covering familiar ground for those who've followed his speeches, speaking of his love of America and his hopes for the years to come.

Then the speech shifted, moving into darker aspects of American life. Thompson's voice became ardent and fiery as he allied himself with the anti-communist views of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Interestingly, Thompson's views were made very specific. He denounced Russia and the Soviet people, rather than taking the usual hard line against a more nebulous and difficult to define "red menace."

For months now, Thompson has been vocal in demanding the scientific creation of "a super-hero for the new age." This time was no exception, but now he added that the superbeing should be created with the specific aim of "physically defending these shores from the growing threat the Soviet nation now poses."

Whether Thompson's more defined outlook will aid in getting government backing for development of this "super-man" is still in question. But judging from the quite vocal support his speech received from government officials that were present, an affirmative answer is near.

In turn, it can also be assumed that Thompson's Senate appointment is equally assured.

Though there has been no formal declaration as yet, sources close to the Governor's office say that Thompson's name is frequently

THOMPSON WANTS A SUPER-HERO.

WELL THAT'S WHAT HE'S GOT IN ME, BOY. A GENU*INE* SUPER-HERO.

SUPERSTRENGTH BEGAN MANIFESTIN' ITSELF, 'FEW MONTHS AGO.

DOCS TELL ME IT'S POWER I WAS LATENTLY IMBUED WITH DURIN' THE WAR. 'S POSSIBLE... GOT CLOSE TO MORE 'N ONE SUPER-POWERED VILLAIN.

THOMPSON SAYS AMERICA'S EXPERIENCIN' A NEW DAWN. HE SAYS HE NEEDS A NEW TYPE 'A HERO.

WELL, HERE I AM, *THE ATOM*, READY AND EAGER. NO MORE BEIN' THE RUNT O' THE *J.S.A.* I'M YOUNG... TOO YOUNG TO RETIRE LIKE THE REST OF 'EM.

ALL VEHICLES MUST STOP

"A *NEW* DAWN... I CAN ALMOST FEEL ITS RAYS ON MY FACE".

THOMPSON HAD REQUESTED TESTS ON AL PRATT'S BODY.

THROUGHOUT THE PROBINGS, THE INJECTIONS, AND THE SCANNINGS, AL'S MIND RACES... FILLED WITH THOUGHTS OF THE GLORY TO COME.

HE SCARCELY NOTICES THE PAIN THAT THE TESTS SOMETIMES CAUSE.

OR THE ACCENTS OF THE SCIENTISTS.

MR. THOMPSON? YES, THIS IS VON LOWE.

WE DID THE TESTS. YES, ALL OF THOSE WE'D PLANNED... AND A FEW WE MADE UP ALONG THE WAY.

I'M SORRY, WE CAN'T USE PRATT. HIS BODY'S *ALREADY* ATOMICALLY POWERED.

YES, BEING THE ACTUAL *TEST* SUBJECT IS OUT OF THE QUESTION... I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED WHY.

I UNDERSTAND, DOCTOR. IT'S BACK TO SQUARE ONE.

NOT QUITE. WE NOW HAVE CELL CULTURES TAKEN FROM PRATT, REMEMBER.

I SUPPOSE THAT'S SOMETHING.

OH, BY THE WAY, ABOUT YOUR APPOINTMENT...

...CONGRATU-LATIONS, *SENATOR.*

I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE, THANK YOU. WE'LL TALK AGAIN, DOCTOR. SOON.

SORRY I CAN'T GIVE YOU MORE TIME, BOB.

IT'S THE SAME REASON I HAVEN'T BEEN RETURNING YOUR CALLS..

WORK, WORK, WORK... THERE JUST AREN'T ENOUGH HOURS IN THE DAY.

BOB, *OUR* FRIENDSHIP BELONGS TO YESTERDAY... MR. AMERICA AND FATMAN'S TIME.

NOW I WANT--I *HAVE*--TO BE REMEMBERED FOR MY WARTIME EXPLOITS. NOT FOR WHAT WENT BEFORE... THE DUMB COSTUME.

THE DUMB SIDEKICK?

TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, IT'S ALL A BIT OF AN EMBARRASSMENT. YOU, BOB, ARE A BIT OF AN EMBARRASSMENT.

YOU UNDERSTAND ME? THIS IS GOODBYE.

YES... I UNDERSTAND.

BOB DALEY'S HANDS ARE SHAKING.

I UNDER-STAND PERFECTLY.

It seems -- the work continues.

Work developing -- re-developing -- the miracle. Again. Yet again.

TYLER CHEMICALS

DELIVERIES IN REAR

The Miracle Pill.

Tyler Chemicals -- my company's like a baby that refuses to grow -- always needing my watchful eye. I should take what happened as an omen -- to hang up the cape, Rex. Move on.

After what happened.

4:07 when I took the pill -- and for an instant I felt the familiar pain that's almost pleasure. I was knight for an hour.

I felt the rush -- of strength, speed and senses. My heart became a snare drum on a roll, and I raced to fight --

The Icicle

Tomorrow it might be the Gambler, The Mist, or some other costumed fool wanting to see bars at his windows for the umpteenth time.

Nowadays they seem to lose out of habit. I beat the Icicle -- as usual -- delivering the knock-out punch just before I felt my powers ebb.

So what happened? what terrible thing happened today?

As the power left me, I looked at my timepiece. It was 4:31.

Hourman's power -- had only lasted 24 minutes.

NO NEEDLESS THOUGHTS.

...OR MOVEMENTS

A ROBOT WOULDN'T MAKE THEM.

BDAMM BDAMM BDAMM

I BELIEVE YOU *KNOW* ME, MY METAL FRIEND.

I HAVE AN *OFFER*...

I'm visiting a hero.

The hero used a wonderful device to right wrongs. A device he invented using his own scientific theories --and those of other great minds.

Einstein for instance. This great man and the hero traded ideas during a few fruitful months before the war.

So Einstein helped to create the hero's wonderful device. And the hero's theories--

--helped to make the Atom Bomb.

NICE PLACE.

WE DO OUR BEST.

With this knowledge, that in some small way he had helped cause Hiroshima and Nagasaki--

--the hero had a breakdown.

I'M AFRAID HE'S NOT MUCH LIKE THE MAN YOU KNEW, MR. CHAMBERS... AND AT NIGHT HIS PERSONALITY DIFFERS EVEN MORE.

HUH...? HOW SO?

WE HAVE A MOMENT. I'LL EXPLAIN QUICKLY...

The wonderful device was called a gravity rod--

KNIGHT, THEO

--The hero's name was Starman.

TED... TED, NOTHING GOOD CAN COME FROM THIS.

GUILT... I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL IT. BUT THERE'S A POINT WHERE YOU HAVE TO SAY "ENOUGH."

LOOK AT YOU. IT'S EATING YOU UP. IT'S KILLING YOU.

I KNOW... I KNOW YOU'RE RIGHT.

BUT PART OF ME SAYS THAT THE PAIN I FEEL IS NO MORE THAN I DESERVE.

The doctor told me to expect this--the daytime Ted Knight--sad, tired, spent--shuffling around in his pajamas.

Then comes night-- Suddenly he's maniacally alive. Gripped with scientific theories that he's formulating--filled with energy.

Hard to believe.

OKAY IF I SMOKE?

OF COURSE. IN FACT, I'LL JOIN YOU IF I MAY.

FOR MY NERVES, YOU UNDERSTAND.

IT WAS AT THE MOUNT WILSON OBSERVATORY THAT I MET EINSTEIN.

I WAS SO THRILLED...

...SO HAPPY.

TED, NO MATTER HOW YOU FEEL... *KNOW* THAT I'M YOUR FRIEND. I'LL VISIT YOU WHENEVER I CAN. I PROMISE.

YOUR CIGARETTES... COULD I...? WOULD YOU MIND? I HATE TO TROUBLE THE NURSES.

I'LL BE SEEING YOU, TED. COUNT ON IT.

the bowery mission looks bad, smells worse, but at least you've got a bed. not like other nights-- sleeping in alleys, doorways, bushes in the parks.

it doesn't matter. *wherever* you sleep--

--the dream remains the same.

a dream of men with accountants' faces and surgeons' scalpels.

you were a hunter--big game--you *know* blood. this sight shouldn't scare you, sicken you. but it does.

force yourself to look--look over their shoulders. fight the fear--the nausea--

--and see the eagle.

feathers, white and brown--now stained crimson.

then the dream shifts, as dreams do.

and you, paul kirk--

--are no longer looking over the surgeons' shoulders.

the dream remains the same.

you awaken, breathless, and thankful you're able to.

you know you need help-- *help* to remember-- *help* to confront what you've managed to forget--

--if only you trusted someone-- *anyone*--enough to ask.

the room smells like a hundred emptying bladders.

but it's quiet--at least it's that--like nights on the Kenyan plains, when the whole world seems to be at peace.

when you were a hunter.

with hunters' instincts so acute...

...that any strange sound would alert them.

CLICK

WHICH ONE'S KIRK?

WHO CARES...

I IN HERE...

WHA--?

...KILL 'EM ALL.

FE--

NO...

NN--

A--

BUT...

THERE!

--IT'S HIM!

IT'S KIRK!

KA--

S...STOP!

STOP!!

-- IN THE NAME OF G--

your ribs feel broken -- it hurts to breathe.

that doesn't matter, you tell yourself. fix it later -- fix it *all* later. the first thing is safety -- safety of the shadows.

run! hide! you're *hunted!*

IT'S NIGHT.

TIME TO WORK.

AUTUMN LEAVES BEGIN TO FLECK THE GROUND OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY.

I'M SORRY, MR. DUNBAR... DANIEL.

I REALLY AM SORRY...

...BUT YOUR PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT SATISFACTORY. ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE *IMPRESSIVE* RECOMMENDATIONS YOU USED TO GAIN ENTRY HERE.

I'VE HAD PROBLEMS THIS SEMESTER.

WHAT ABOUT LAST SEMESTER? AND THE ONE BEFORE THAT? FRANKLY, DANIEL, I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER IF YOU SIMPLY LEFT.

YOUR OFFICE?

"THE UNIVERSITY."

THE WAR YEARS FOR "DAN THE DYNA-MITE" WERE HARD TIMES. THEY COST HIM HIS YOUTH... AND THE LIFE OF HIS MENTOR, T.N.T.

THEN MORE HARD TIMES STUDYING AND TRYING, IN THE HOPE THAT PRINCETON WAS THE BEGINNING OF A FUTURE.

WAS IT ALL FOR NOTHING, HE THINKS... AND FEELS LIKE CRYING.

MY LIFE... IT SHOULDN'T BE THIS WAY... I WANT... I *DESERVE* MORE...

ST BROWNS

2ND PLACE

HONORABLE MENTION

FOURTH PLACE

I DESERVE...

NOK NOK NOK

DANIEL DUNBAR!...

...AMERICA NEEDS YOU.